

A limine

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Neither before nor beyond any limit that would define its location or orientation, whatever might be characterized as "liminary" could not itself be placed. Liminary—belonging to (*-aris*) the threshold (*limen*)—it could only move to and from the threshold that it already is, and thus could not "belong" or "be" in any way but for this longing, this restless hedging, edging towards that which escapes all settings, whether they be supposed as grounds or ways, boundaries or aims. Liminary, restless—and therefore indefinite in its claim—: these are the traits that *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (1955), the threshold-title of Paul Celan's third collection of poems, should indicate, as Celan wrote in a letter to Jürgen Rausch from 22 February 1954:

Damit ist, so glaube und hoffe ich zumindest, ausser einem gewiss nicht unwesentlichen Zug des Dichterischen, seinem liminaren Charakter nämlich, auch das Nie-zur-Ruhe-Kommen des Poetischen angedeutet und mithin wohl auch der—schlechthin unerfüllbare—Unendlichkeitsanspruch jeglicher Aussage in diesem Bereich.¹

With this, Celan makes clear that the syntagma "von Schwelle zu Schwelle" does not describe a trajectory between two determinate locations, marked off by two instances of the same substantive. Rather, he elucidates how the phrase signifies a "*Zug des Dichterischen*," which, as such, would traverse and exceed the limits of any every single "*Gedicht*," as well as any

¹ This passage from Celan's letter from 22 February 1954 appears in Barbara Wiedemann's edition of Celan's poems, *Die Gedichte: Neue kommentierte Gesamtausgabe in einem Band*, edited by Barbara Wiedemann (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2018), 705–06.

"Aussage" that should occur in the area from and to which poetic language speaks—including "von Schwelle zu Schwelle."

Before any architectural passage that one may come to cross, as well as any metaphor besides this very transport—this "Übertritt und Übertragung"² of the threshold "itself"—Celan's formulation addresses the through-movement of language that could never be over and through with and that could therefore also be approached, with Werner Hamacher, as a "Transzendieren ohne Transzendenz."³ The "liminare Charakter" of the poetic, as Celan describes it, thus already implies "das Nie-zur-Ruhe-Kommen" of which he goes on to speak—the "auch" signifying not addition, but mutual implication—and thereby exposes each word of a threshold and each threshold-word to part from itself—"von Schwelle"—towards the same—"zu Schwelle"—without ever coinciding with itself, collapsing into sameness, or coming to rest. It is along these lines, moreover, that a similar, because "self"-altering movement might be said to characterize the other titles for cycles and poems from *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* that Celan had considered as alternative names for the collection. To begin, a sheer movement towards a vague isle or insularity is sketched in the cycle, poem, and word "Inselhin," which appears on the title page of the manuscript Celan initially delivered to his publisher in Stuttgart,⁴ and which traces an indefinite trajectory because and not despite of the fact that it is itself by definition singular,

² Werner Hamacher, "Die Sekunde der Inversion: Bewegungen einer Figur durch Celans Gedichte," in *Entferntes Verstehen: Studien zu Philosophie und Literatur von Kant bis Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), 323–68, here 343.

³ Werner Hamacher, *95 Thesen zur Philologie* (Holderbank: Engeler, 2010), 4. Nearly the same formulation occurs in his analysis on the movement that is traced through Celan's poem, "Zu beiden Händen," which he describes as "der Weg eines Transzendierens ohne Transzendenz und Transzendental." Werner Hamacher, "Tò autó, das Selbe, — —," in *Keinmaleins: Texte zu Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2019), 181–208, here 207. It should also be noted that the dashes which mark off the sections of this essay are meant to recall Hamacher's and Celan's inscriptions of this grapheme, yet without necessarily being "citations."

⁴ Paul Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle: Vorstufen—Textgenese—Endfassung*, edited by Heino Schmull, Christiane Braun, and Markus Heilmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2002), 2. See also the editors' comments on the original manuscript in Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, ix.

insular—both "insel-" and "-hin"—and therefore beyond all landings or islands. No less indefinite, however, is the elucidation from out of silence which "Argumentum e silentio" evokes,⁵ which names the poem that Celan dedicates and addresses to René Char, and that sheds light initially and throughout upon the want for words from which it departs.⁶ And in the meantime, the third possibility Celan entertained—namely, the phrase that he had encountered in Parmenides and adopted for the cycle and the poem, "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel"—metonymically evokes thresholds, but in a way where the restless altering of key surpasses and thereby suspends any dual opposition between the alternatives of opening and closure, while spelling an alteration or "w-e-c-h-s-e-l" of the "s-c-h-w-e-l-l-e" itself.⁷

Yet at the same time, already those movements which might be tracked through the various titles of *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* indicate how the "nicht unwesentlichen Zug des Dichterischen" they describe—as well as the "Unendlichkeitsanspruch jeglicher Aussage in

⁵ As the editors of *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* also note, Celan had written to his wife Gisèle Celan-Lestrange from Stuttgart on 1 February 1955: "Le livre paraîtra sans doute avant Pâques (mais il y a des difficultés pour le titre: <Inselhin> n'a pas été retenu, j'insiste, avec, je crois, une certaine chance de succès, sur <Argumentum e silentio>." *Paul Celan—Gisèle Celan-Lestrange: Correspondance (1951–1970)*, edited by Bertrand Badiou and Eric Celan, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), 1: 72. Cf. Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, viii–ix. The poem was dedicated to René Char, after appearing without the dedication in the same issue of *Texte und Zeichen*, where Celan first published his translation of Char's "À la santé du serpent." See *Paul Celan—René Char: Correspondance 1954–1968*, edited by Bertrand Badiou (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), 67.

⁶ To the extent that the formula "Argumentum e silentio" speaks first of all its derivation from the Greek ἀργός and ἄργυρος ("shining, glistening," "silver"), it may be read to indicate not only an elucidation *from out of* silence, but also the shining *of* silence. This possibility is emphasized in Celan's poem, where the words of the title are varied with the parallel syntagma that repeats throughout, "zwischen Gold und Vergessen," which similarly pairs the name for a bright metal with the evocation of that which is forgotten, unknown, and unspoken, but with the difference that no relation links them in the chain that is described—not even the "und" between them, which should instead mark the place of the "night"—: "An die Kette gelegt / zwischen Gold und Vergessen / die Nacht." And when the poem goes on to dedicate what is called "das erschwiegene Wort" to the night, this withheld word is similarly evoked and named in its obscurity.

⁷ In his copy of Wilhelm Capelle's translation of Parmenides's fragments, among others, Celan had underscored the passage that reads: "Dort ist das Tor, durch das die Pfade von Tag und Nacht gehen. Türzsturz und steinerne Schwelle umfassen es. Es selber—in Äthers Höhen—ist von mächtigen Türflügeln ausgefüllt. Zu ihnen hat Dike, die Göttin der Vergeltung, die wechselnden Schlüssel." Wilhelm Capelle, *Die Vorsokratiker* (Leipzig: Kröner, 1935), 162; cf. *La Bibliothèque philosophique de Paul Celan*, edited by Alexandra Richter, Patrik Alac, and Bertrand Badiou (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2004), 8. The copy that Celan owned dates from 1953, around the same time that he was composing the poems that would be collected in *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (1951–1955).

diesem Bereich"—also entails that this poetic language in no way keeps to itself, but restlessly gives way to word of others, and not only through the dedications that are inscribed in this collection more frequently and pronouncedly than in any previous or subsequent publication signed in Celan's name,⁸ nor merely through the poems set under the sign of the memorial and the epitaph, but also the cenotaph—"In Memoriam Paul Eluard," "Grabschrift für François," "Kenotaph." For beyond every single nameable or expressly unnamed addressee, this liminary-language traces the endless and wayless, aporetic motion of the porous that allows each passage to be crossed through by traces and variations of "key" phrases and words from the oeuvres of Parmenides and Anaximander, Martin Heidegger and René Char, among others, whose more and less marked occurrences expose each iteration to have been variable from the first.⁹ Hence, in the commentary that Celan offers Jürgen Rausch upon the title, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*—itself a phrase that will have already occurred in *Mohn und Gedächtnis*¹⁰—he adds a remark upon the repetitions of "the same" that further the threshold-language that is at issue: "Hinzu kommt auch noch, auf anderer Ebene freilich, dass dem Leser dasselbe 'Hauptwort' zweimal vors (mehr oder

⁸ In addition to the dedication to Gisèle Celan-Lestrange that appears on the title page, "Nächtlich geschürzt" is dedicated to Hannah and Hermann Lenz; "Argumentum e silentio," to René Char; and "Die Winzer," to Nani and Klaus Demus. Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, 87, 109, 111.

⁹ It is a similarly restless, liminary movement—"nach so vielen extremen Formulierungen"—that Celan will reiterate in the often-cited passage from the *Meridian*, the speech that he delivered upon receiving the Georg-Büchner Prize in 1960, where he will have said: "das Gedicht behauptet sich am Rande seiner selbst; es ruft und holt sich, um bestehen zu können, unausgesetzt aus seinem Schon-nicht-mehr in sein Immer-noch zurück." Paul Celan, *Der Meridian: Endfassung—Entwürfe—Materialien*, edited by Bernhard Böschstein and Heino Schmuil (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999), 8. For even where it is a question of "bestehen," this word does not refer to the ever-constant, standing threshold of the "now" that was said to persist as the limit between the "no longer" and the "not yet" in Aristotle's *Physics*—which the pairing of "Schon-nicht-mehr" and "Immer noch" might otherwise distantly recall—but rather the retrieval of the "ever yet" from out of its "already no longer." The "ever yet" into which the poem draws and withdraws itself could therefore only be the "ever yet" of the perished and the perishing. Hence, in his commentary on those verses from "Radix, Matrix" which describe a similar movement—"Ja, / wie man zum Stein spricht, wie / du / mit meinen Händen dorthin / und ins Nichts greifst, so / ist, was hier ist"—Hamacher explicates: "Hier ist dasjenige sprachliche Sein artikuliert—und Sein *ist* nur als derart artikuliertes, in dem die Sprache auf ihr eigenes Nichts, auf das Nichts ihrer Referenz, ihrer Bedeutung und ihrer Bestimmung ausgreift. Auf es bezieht sie sich als auf ihr Nicht-Mehr, sie ist—und das ist ihr *so*, ihr Modus, ihre Art und ihr Geschlecht—das Schon-Da ihres Nicht-Mehr, der Bezug auf ihr Nichts, in dem sich der Bezug, der sie zur Sprache macht, entzieht." Hamacher, "Die Sekunde der Inversion," 354.

¹⁰ See Celan, "Chanson einer Dame im Schatten," in *Die Gedichte*, 41–42.

minder wache) Auge tritt."¹¹ For insofar as this brief remark is introduced to indicate another level of the liminary, it suggests that the "threshold" which "steps" twice before one's eyes cannot stand itself, but is only ever getting away with every approach, and it implies that this restless "threshold" will have differed all along from the threshold that it is said to be all the same. And far from resting at that, Celan's remarks upon the headwords of his title also thereby approach in advance the alterations of "das Selbe" through the later poem, "Zu beiden Händen," as Werner Hamacher has traced them in his essay on Celan's, Heidegger's, and Parmenides's various articulations of the foundational philosophical concept of the "same": "dieses Selbe kann nicht einmal mit sich selbst das Selbe gewesen sein es kann nicht *sein* und ist nicht zu *denken* als das Selbe, als das es doch benannt wird."¹²

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What is said through "Von Schwelle zu Schwelle"—but also "Inselhin," "Argumentum e silentio," "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel," and so forth—therefore also says that it could not be limited by the bounds of Celan's book or bound to his signature alone. Already the fragment from Parmenides's prooemium that "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel" translates, transports, and transforms—without ever coming past it or leaving it behind—traces what could be described as an indefinite movement "from threshold to threshold," which, as such, could not but go on to cross and cross through the definitive distinctions that are later drawn between the ways of being, non-being, and semblance. And conversely, by drawing from Parmenides's opening verses in a way that exposes their troubling implications for any being to speak of, Celan draws attention through his poem to the critical importance of those passages which many commentators address

¹¹ Paul Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 706.

¹² Werner Hamacher, "Tò autó," 183.

as being merely "marginal."¹³ For all his elucidating observations on the Hesiodic strains that span Parmenides's initial verses, as well as its further resonance in the discourse that follows, Walther Kranz suggests that the prooemium is primarily derived from "der geläufigen Vorstellung [...], daß Licht und Wahrheit identisch sind, und [...] daß es einer Fahrt ins Jenseits bedarf, um die Wahrheit zu holen."¹⁴ Even Martin Heidegger, who declares "die mythische Erfahrung" to be what gives Parmenides that "which gives itself to be thought [*was sich...zu denken gibt*],"¹⁵ nonetheless recurs less to the journey the prooemium relates, than to those verses which deliver truth claims regarding thinking and being in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* and *Was heißt Denken?*—which were also among those commentaries on early Greek thought that Celan had read and studied around the time from which the poems of *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* date.¹⁶ But it may be precisely in dwelling upon the preliminary or liminary passages of Parmenides's poem, as Celan's title and poem "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel" suggests, that an inroad first opens through Parmenides's language to articulations of thinking, being, and experience that unsettle the fundamentals of his ontology as it has hitherto been understood, and allow it to be addressed otherwise.¹⁷

¹³ And a Hamacher observes, Celan's poem "Zu beiden Händen" does the "same." See Hamacher, "Tò autó," 188.

¹⁴ Walther Kranz, "Über Aufbau und Bedeutung des parmenideischen Gedichts," in *Studien zur antiken Literatur und ihrem Nachwirken* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1967), 128–43, here 133

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Moirā (Parmenides VIII, 34–41)," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1954), 231–56, here 248.

¹⁶ In addition to Wilhelm Capelle's *Die Vorsokratiker*, Celan's documented readings during the years in which he wrote the poems collected in *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* include Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz's *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Wiedmannsche Buchhandlung, 1906); Erwin Reischer's "Dionysos und Hades: Über ein Fragment des Heraklit: Eine Interpretation des 15. Heraklit-Fragments," *Merkur* 74, no. 4 (1954): 340–51; and Friedrich Überweg's *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie des Altertums* (Berlin: Mittler und Sohn, 1920). These readings coincide chronologically with Celan's engagement with Heidegger's *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997), *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2015), and *Was heißt Denken?*, where Heidegger develops interpretations of Parmenides, among others. See *La Bibliothèque philosophique*, 3, 11, 19, 348, 356, 401.

¹⁷ This notion and phrasing are inspired yet again by Hamacher's exquisite reading of Celan's "Zu beiden Händen," where he shows Celan's poem to have opened a hitherto unspoken "Zugang" to Parmenides's articulation of the same, among others. See especially Hamacher, "Tò autó," 188.

The opening movement of Parmenides's poem is traced through the following lines in Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz's edition, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*:

ἵπποι ταί με φέρουσιν, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι,
πέμπον, ἐπεὶ μ' ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι
δαίμονες, ἢ κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη φέρει εἰδότα φῶτα·
τῆι φερόμην· τῆι γάρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι
ἄρμα τιταίνουσαι, κοῦραι δ' ὁδὸν ἡγεμόνευον.
ἄξων δ' ἐν χνοίησιν ἴει σύριγγος αὐτήν
αἰθόμενος (δοιοῖς γὰρ ἐπέιγετο δινωτοῖσιν
κύκλοις ἀμφοτέρωθεν), ὅτε σπερχοῖατο πέμπειν
Ἥλιάδες κοῦραι, προλιποῦσαι δώματα Νυκτός,
εἰς φάος, ὠσάμεναι κράτων ἄπο χερσὶ καλύπτρας.
ἔνθα πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἥματός εἰσι κελεύθων,
καὶ σφας ὑπέρθυρον ἀμφὶς ἔχει καὶ λάινος σὺδός·
αὐταὶ δ' αἰθέρῃαι πλῆνται μεγάλοισι θυρέτροις·
τῶν δὲ Δίκη πολύποινος ἔχει κληῖδας ἀμοιβούς.
τὴν δὴ παρφάμεναι κοῦραι μαλακοῖσι λόγοισιν.
πεῖσαν ἐπιφραδέως, ὡς σφιν βαλανωτὸν ὀχῆα
ἀπτερέως ὥσειε πυλέων ἄπο· ταὶ δὲ θυρέτρων
χάσμ' ἀχανὲς ποίησαν ἀναπτάμεναι πολυχάλκους
ἄξονας ἐν σύριγγιν ἀμοιβαδὸν εἰλίξασαι
γόμοις καὶ περόνησιν ἀρηρότε· τῆι ῥα δι' αὐτέων

ιθὺς ἔχον κοῦραι κατ' ἀμαξιτὸν ἄρμα καὶ ἵππους.
καί με θεὰ πρόφρων ὑπεδέξατο, χεῖρα δὲ χειρὶ
δεξιτερῆν ἔλεν, ὧδε δ' ἔπος φάτο καί με προσηύδα·
ὦ κοῦρ' ἀθανάτοισι συνάορος ἠνιόχοισιν,
ἵπποις ταί σε φέρουσιν ικάνων ἡμέτερον δῶ,
χαῖρ', ἐπεὶ οὔτι σε μοῖρα κακὴ προὔπεμπε νέεσθαι
τήνδ' ὁδόν (ἧ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν),
ἀλλὰ θέμις τε δίκη τε. χρεῶ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμῆς ἤτορ
ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθῆς.
ἀλλ' ἔμπησ' καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεται, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα
χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα.¹⁸ (Fr. 1)

The mares that carry me [φέρουσιν] kept conveying me [πέμπον] as far as ever my spirit reached, once they had taken and set me on the goddess' way of much discourse, which carries over all towns a man who knows [εἰδότα φῶτα]. On this I was carried [φερόμην], for on this the sagacious mares were carrying me [φέρων], straining at the chariot and guided by the maidens along the way. The axle in the naves kept blazing and uttering the pipe's loud note, driven onwards at both ends by its two metallated wheels, whenever the daughters of the sun made haste to convey me, having thrust with their hands their veils from their heads and deserted the home of night for the light. There stand the gates of the

¹⁸ All references to the fragments of Parmenides are cited parenthetically by fragment number according to the most recent edition of Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz's *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951).

ways of night and day, enclosed at top and bottom by a lintel and threshold of stone, and they themselves fitting closely to a great architrave in the aether. Justice of much-recompense [πολύποινος] holds the alternating keys [κλήϊδας ἀμοιβούς], whom the maidens, speaking to sway her with soft words, persuaded cunningly to thrust the locked bar for them in a moment from the gates, which, flying open, made a gaping chasm [χάσμι' ἀχανές] of the gateway, turning alternately in their sockets the bronze-fitted posts fixed to them with pegs and nails. Whereupon the maidens drove the chariot and mares straight on through the gates along the road. And the goddess received me warmly, and taking my right hand in hers spoke as follows and addressed me: "Welcome, O youth, reaching our home as consort of immortal charioteers and mares that carry you [ταί σε φέρουσιν]; no ill lot [μοῖρα] sent you forth [προὔπεμπε] to arrive upon this way [τήνδ' ὁδόν], which is removed indeed from the step of men [ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν], but right and justice. You must be informed of everything, both of the untrembling heart of persuasive reality and of the beliefs of mortals, which comprise no genuine conviction; nevertheless you shall learn these also, how the things that are believed had to be in a valid / credible way, ranging through all things.¹⁹

¹⁹ The English translation of Parmenides that cited here and throughout is adopted from A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides: A Critical Text with Introduction and Translation, the Ancient Testimonia and a Commentary*, edited by Richard McKirahan (Las Vegas, Zurich, and Athens: Parmenides Publishing, 2009), 48–54. The translation has occasionally been modified. The last clause in the passage cited above differs especially from Coxon's version, which reads, "how it was necessary that the things that are believed to be should have their being in general acceptance, ranging through all things from end to end." As many commentators have pointed out, the translation of the adverb δοκίμως, which he renders "in general acceptance," depends upon how one interprets the role of belief or opinion (δόξα) in Parmenides's thought; i.e., whether it is merely illusory or a mode of appearance that has its foundation and legitimation in being. The latter interpretation is adopted here, on the basis of Hans Schwabl's arguments in "Sein und Doxa bei Parmenides," in *Um die Begriffswelt der Vorsokratiker*, edited by Hans-Georg Gadamer (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 391–422, here 402. In a translation and interpretation that is largely inspired by Heidegger's elucidations of semblance as implicated in being, Jean Beaufret similarly renders the verses in question: "comment la diversité qui fait montre d'elle-même devait déployer une présence digne d'être reçue, étendant son règne à travers toutes choses." Jean Beaufret, *Le poème de Parménide* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 79.

With this, Parmenides imparts a journey with no point of departure, but a rapid motion of conveyance that at once remains ongoing—"The mares [...] *carry me* [φέρουσιν]"—and that also will have already arrived upon an infinitely distant threshold nearly as soon as it finds itself in motion.²⁰ All that it takes, it would seem, is to be going in order to be "there [ἔνθα]," where the gates for the ways of night and day appear suspended "in the aether [αἰθέριαι]," and ultimately reveal nothing but a sheer chasm when they fly open: "the gates [...], flying open, made a gaping chasm [χάσμι' ἀχανές] of the gateway." But if this threshold is the destination and destiny of the speaker—he will have been sent forth in advance by Μοῖρα—the open threshold reveals nothing but an opening, nothing that could be seen and known, nothing that could be experienced—and therefore nothing that could or could not be—and in this way, it resembles the way that will have just been traversed. Coming and continuing from out of nowhere, the trajectory of the poem is as abrupt as the rupture to which it leads—the rupture of the threshold—which is also all that is "there."

Over all shifts that are suggested over the course of Parmenides's opening verses, then, from the emphatic repetition of verbs for motion, through to the varying verbal tenses (cf. Fr. 1, ll. 1, 4; φέρουσιν, φερόμην),²¹ the poem also only ever moves in place—namely, before the threshold that is none, but an abyss—and it thus remains all the while without the threshold, in all senses of "without." Nor does this restless situation change when the maidens of the sun are said to have "held [ἔχον]" the chariot to its course through the chasm, for the entrance into the

²⁰ At the start of his study, Kranz also emphasizes the abruptness of Parmenides's (ongoing) movement: "Über die Vorbereitungen des Abenteuers erfahren wir nichts, zunächst auch nichts über die Abfahrt." Kranz, "Über Aufbau und Bedeutung," 128.

²¹ In his commentary, A.H. Coxon similarly emphasizes "the variations of tense and mood," writing that they imply "that P. regards himself as still drawn by the mares, though the journey to the goddess is past." Coxon, *The Fragments*, 270. Though one would also need to question his assumption that "the journey" is "past," and inquire further into what the "past" could mean in this context.

home of the goddess not only remains a gap in the speaker's trajectory; her welcoming words also suggest that the decisive passage may not have been crossed. Strictly speaking, the place that the goddess calls home is one that her visitor is ever yet nearing—: upon receiving him, she says he is "*reaching* [ἰκάνων]" her home with the mares that "are carrying [φέρουσιν]" him;²² she speaks of him as still being on "*this way* [τήνδ' ὁδόν];" and in speaking in this way, the goddess thereby indicates that her guest comes merely to go on as he was going from the outset: "The mares that carry me kept conveying me as far as ever my spirit *reached* [ἰκάνοι], once they had taken and set me on the goddess' *way* [ὁδόν] of much discourse." At the same time, moreover, it could hardly be otherwise for the maidens themselves: for if they will have departed from the "home of night" for "the light" only in order to approach the "gates of the ways of night and day [πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἡματός κελεύθων]," then their departure was their return; then they will have changed places in no time and at all times, but without going or resting anywhere, either, because their "home" is situated *ab initio* at the non-place and non-time of the chasmic threshold over which all are left in the dark, through which differences like day and night first open, and to which the keys themselves are changing (κληῖδας ἀμοιβούς).²³

Nothing could seem farther from the truth that the goddess promises this "man who knows [εἰδότα φῶτα]," and whose very name (φῶς) already blends with the light (φάος) towards

²² Coxon's translation of the present participle ἰκάνων ("arriving at"), does not come as close to emphasizing the ongoing reach that it implies as the translations that are offered in Diels's and Kranz's edition—"unserem Hause nahst"—and in Kurt Riezler's version: "unserem Hause nahend." See Coxon, *The Fragments*, 52; and Kurt Riezler, *Parmenides: Übersetzung, Einführung und Interpretation* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2017), 25.

²³ In his study, Kranz offers other arguments for reading the home that the maidens approach as the "Haus der Nacht." Kranz, "Über Aufbau und Bedeutung des parmenideischen Gedichts," 129–30. This possibility is elaborated at length in Raymond Prier's study, where he traces the similarities between Parmenides's verses and Hesiod's lines on the "House of Night" from the *Theogony*, arguing that "The 'threshold' or 'gates' to which Hesiod and Parmenides refer is their horizon or that point where day becomes night or night turns to day and where *they meet and are one*." Raymond Prier, *Archaic Logic: Symbol and Structure in Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 99. Schwabl also stresses that the initial "Wagenfahrt zu dem Punkte führt, wo Tag und Nacht den gemeinsamen Ausgang haben." Schwabl, "Sein und Doxa," 398. In his meticulous reading of this passage, Jean Bollack draws the consequence: "La porte ne fait pas entrer dans une maison [...]; elle s'ouvre sur un dehors, qui se transforme en un dedans, celui même que l'on quitte." Bollack, *Parménide*, 86.

which he heads.²⁴ Nothing could seem farther, that is, if the truth to be told were solely the myth of "how it-is [ὡς ἔστιν]," as it is said at the beginning of the eighth fragment—"Only one myth of the way is still left: that / how it-is [μόνος δ'ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο / λείπεται ὡς ἔστιν]" (Fr. 8)²⁵—and if that were all there is to it. But as "it is" explicated, it turns out that this myth of the only way to go recycles key motifs from the course and discourse that were traversed before, and vice versa. From the beginning, the sheer indetermination of the opening stretch of the journey, as well as the indefinite reaching that persists before and beyond the threshold, corresponds to the way in which being is said to be steadily reaching itself: "for there is no not-being that could pause it from *reaching* the same [οὔτε γὰρ οὐκ ἐὼν ἔστι, τό κεν παύοι μιν ἰκνεῖσθαι / εἰς ὁμόν]" (Fr. 8).²⁶ Hence, if being can also be called "motionless [ἀκίνητον]"—"motionless" being one among the many the "non"-determinations that the goddess will name as "signs [σήματα]" of being: "ungenerated and imperishable, for it is whole-of-limb and untrembling [ἀγένητον ἐὼν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν, / ἐστι γὰρ οὐλομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές]" (Fr. 8)²⁷—then its motionlessness could not refer to a dead standstill, but could only signify the incessant character of its reaching, as it reaches for—and therefore past—itself. Ever behind itself in advance, being therefore not only invites the comparison that will be drawn to a perfect circle—like a "well-rounded sphere [εὐκόκλου σφαίρης]," it is never more or less here or there (Fr. 8)—it also describes a restless movement from threshold to threshold that never comes to itself once and for all. Hence, being "motionless" is further explicated as being "without-pause [ἄπαυστον]" (Fr. 8),²⁸ which phrase

²⁴ This optical emphasis is also observed by Bollack, who argues as well that the "goddess" (θεά) who receives the speaker of the poem likewise recalls her homonym, θεά, which signifies "la vision ou la contemplation." Bollack, *Parménide*, 89.

²⁵ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 64, trans. modified.

²⁶ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 78, trans. modified, my emphasis.

²⁷ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 64, trans. modified.

²⁸ My translation; cf. Coxon, *The Fragments*, 72.

recurs in the verses on there being no "not-being that could pause [being] from reaching the same [οὐκ ἔδὸν ἔστι, τό κεν παύοι μιν ἰκνεῖσθαι / εἰς ὁμόν]."

Being may not itself be subject to the vacillating accidents of beings, such as "coming to be and perishing [γίγνεσθαί τε καὶ ὄλλυσθαι]," or "changing place [τόπον ἀλλάσσειν]" (Fr. 8),²⁹ but it is also not static in its motionlessness or indifferent in its continuity.³⁰ Hence, when the goddess addresses the continuity of being in another fragment, it is just as imperative not to ball it all together as it is not to disperse it in one's mind:

λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόωι παρεόντα βεβαίως·
οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐδὸν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι
οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντη πάντως κατὰ κόσμον
οὔτε συνιστάμενον (Fr. 4)

Gaze similarly upon absent things with your mind as steadily present. For it will not sever Being from cleaving to being, as either scattering or congealing in every direction in every way in regular order.³¹

Or, as Wilhelm Capelle translates, placing a greater emphasis upon spacing than timing:

²⁹ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 78, trans. modified.

³⁰ Bollack similarly observes: "L'Étant se mue en objet, dans les limites de ce mouvement qui l'habite dans l'immobilité et le soutient. Il s'y lie à lui-même, dans ses 'liens.'" Bollack, *Parménide*, 120. And later, he reiterates—albeit with regard to a different passage—: "L'unité se fond sur le retour de quelque chose, la pression du semblable sur le semblable, à la place du dissemblable. Avec L'Étant qui se contient lui-même, Parménide pose les jalons de la dualité qui règle l'organisation du monde." Bollack, *Parménide*, 163.

³¹ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 60, trans. modified.

Sieh, wie auch das Ferne deinem Geist greifbar nahe ist; denn er wird doch nicht das Seiende vom Seienden trennen! Es löst sich ja nirgends auch nur irgendwie aus seinem Gefüge noch ballt es sich wieder zusammen.³²

The key in these passages is the movement of difference and deferral they articulate, even if the assertion that being cannot cut out cleaving to itself were merely another way of affirming the oneness of being, as Heidegger suggests in *Was heißt Denken?*: "Das Anwesen ist das Einende-Eine-Einzige, das als Gänze west, nicht zerstückbar und vollends nie erst zusammengestückt aus dem jeweils An- und Abwesenden."³³ For the repetition that occurs from "being" to "being" (τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἐόντος) also says that its cleaving or holding (ἔχεσθαι) implies a minimal yet impassable distance all the same, a limit of contiguity that keeps being back from itself (ἔχεσθαι), and a liminary character whose simple elimination simply could not be. The "homogene Kontinuum zwischen Anwesen und Anwesendem" that Heidegger and Parmenides would confirm thus entails, as Hamacher has written, "den offenen Zwischenraum zwischen jenem einen Selben."³⁴ However one might seek to affirm the continuous oneness of being on the basis of this passage, it would therefore seem that its articulation cannot but break with the semblance of any continuum that would not be marked by rupture and contingency at every point. Being could no more be said than non-being,³⁵ then, but solely indicated through the movement of discourse, which only

³² Capelle, *Die Vorsokratiker*, 164.

³³ Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?*, edited by Paola-Ludovika Coriando (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2002), 264. This portion of Heidegger's lecture course is only available in the edition of the *Gesamtausgabe*, which Celan would not have read; with this exception, the edition that Celan had read and annotated (published by Niemeyer) is cited throughout this essay. Cf. *La Bibliothèque philosophique*, 392.

³⁴ Hamacher, "Tὸ αὐτό," 207.

³⁵ As she addresses the alternative ways of being and not-being, the goddess says of the latter: for you can neither know what is not (for it is impossible) nor tell of it [οὔτε γὰρ ἄν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐόν, οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν, / οὔτε φράσεις]" (Fr. 2). Coxon, *The Fragments*, 56.

ever broaches the threshold of "how it-is [ὡς ἔστιν],"³⁶ remains on edge, and hinges upon its vanishing point.

By hedging, edging towards being in this way, Parmenides's lines allow being to appear away and beside itself—: ἀπ-παρ-εόν. In so doing, however, they also indicate that it could not be seen as the goddess enjoins her visitor to behold it: namely, via the light that shines through the commanding verb of her order (λεῦσσε), evoking a range of words for brightness in and beyond Parmenides's Ancient Greek (e.g., λευκός, *luceo*).³⁷ What she calls for is a vision of being in its transcendence—and that is: its trans-scansion—through the "absent" and the "present;" through the "near" and the "far;" and therefore too, although she does not say so here, through the "light" and the "night" which were evoked at the outset, and which will later be said to compose all that appears to be absent and present, near and far. As she clarifies: "all is full of light and invisible night together [πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου]" (Fr. 9),³⁸ recalling not only her previous words on the way "all is full of Being [πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἐόντος]" (Fr. 8),³⁹ but also the preliminary words on the threshold of day and night, which marked the junction of being—if "there [ἔνθα]" ever were one—where "night rejoins day [*Nuit rejoint Jour*],"⁴⁰ and where a gaping chasm opens in lieu of all that is. Nothing less than all of this is what the survey of being should reach, but the luminosity that the goddess privileges with her imperative translates to regarding the absent as present, but not the presence of absence; to

³⁶ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 64, trans. modified.

³⁷ See Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: Histoire des mots*, vol. 3 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1974), s.v. λεύσσω. Bollack also highlights this connection, writing: "Le verbe *leussein* évoque une vision appartenant à un autre ordre; la nature particulière de ce regard s'appuie sur la lumière de l'intellect." Bollack, *Parménide*, 308. Kranz also characterizes the voyage of the proemium, as well as the way of being that the goddess imparts, as the "Weg zu Licht und Wahrheit." Kranz, "Aufbau und Bedeutung," 134.

³⁸ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 88.

³⁹ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 70. This repetition has often been noted by commentators; see, for example, Coxon, *The Fragments*, 361; and Schwabl, "Sein und Doxa," 409–11.

⁴⁰ Jean Bollack, *Parménide*, 77, 80, my translation.

elucidating the night, but not the dark in its obscurity; and to seeing through being, but not the "through" of being as it cleaves to itself and cleaves open.⁴¹ By the goddess's own lights, these obscure aspects of being at the opposite of end the spectrum are no privileged knowledge of hers, but the experience of privation that she acknowledges to the dead, and presumably, abandons: "the corpse does not perceive light, heat, or sound on account of the ellipsis / leaving-out [ἔκλειψιν] of fire, but it does perceive cold and silence [τὸν νεκρὸν φωτὸς μὲν καὶ θερμοῦ καὶ φωνῆς οὐκ αἰσθάνεσθαι διὰ τὴν ἔκλειψιν τοῦ πυρός, ψυχροῦ δὲ καὶ σιωπῆς...αἰσθάνεσθαι]."⁴² Yet if the discourse of the goddess does not and cannot illuminate these dimensions of being—namely, its night and its not—what little is said of them here is not merely negative. Rather, it indicates that there could be no end to approaching the issues that will have opened through Parmenides's poem; that those issues solicit further and other articulations; and that the truth at issue may never have resided exclusively with the light-minded goddess in her home, but with the goddess who holds the changing keys to the threshold of day *and* night, or, in a word—: "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel."

— —

The goddess who holds the keys in Parmenides's poem is called Δίκη, whose name is most often rendered "Justice," but just as often interpreted in divergent ways. Hermann Fränkel reads it to

⁴¹ No mind could comprehend being at once and as one, since each "mind" (νόος) would have to be thought as inseparable from being as well, and therefore at variance with it and itself, as manifested in its varying degrees of lucidity. As the goddess herself will clarify: "For as each holds a temper [of light and night] which it has of the vagrant limbs," she says, "so does the mind stand by for men [ὡς γὰρ ἕκαστος ἔχει κρᾶσιν μελέων πολυπλάγκτων / τὼς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρίσταται]" (Fr. 16). Coxon, *The Fragments*, 94, trans. modified. The blindness of any single-minded orientation towards light is perhaps most concisely addressed by Maurice Blanchot in *L'Espace littéraire*, however distant that space may otherwise be from the journey of Parmenides. After introducing what he calls the "other" night, in distinction to any night as we know it—"Dans la nuit, tout a disparu. C'est la première nuit. Mais quand tout a disparu dans la nuit, 'tout a disparu' apparaît. C'est l'autre nuit"—he goes on to remark: "La première nuit, c'est encore une construction du jour. [...] Plus le jour s'étend, avec le fier souci de devenir universel, plus l'élément nocturne risque de se retirer dans la lumière même, plus ce qui nous éclaire est nocturne, est l'incertitude et la démesure de la nuit." Maurice Blanchot, *L'Espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), 213, 219.

⁴² Coxon, *The Fragments*, 142, trans. modified.

signify not a primarily juridical notion, but the "Norm der Wesensrichtigkeit und der Denkrichtigkeit," whence Dike's decisive role in permitting or refusing entry through the gates, as determined by the nature of the one who seeks passage.⁴³ In his commentaries on both Parmenides and Anaximander, Heidegger similarly emphasizes the inadequacy of modern juridical concepts to the Greek thought of "justice," but speaks of Δίκη as the jointure or "Fuge" within which beings come into their own by abiding for their respective times and letting one another be in this way.⁴⁴ By contrast, in the translation of Parmenides's fragment from which Celan drew his title, Dike is glossed as "die Göttin der Vergeltung,"⁴⁵ evoking the notions of repayment, exchange, and equivalence from which Fränkel and Heidegger, among others, take their distance.

In the poem that Celan names "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel," however, what is translated is precisely this critical indecision over "Justice."⁴⁶ Dike is not explicitly named or implicitly characterized along the lines of veridical, ontological, or juridical economies, nor does any barred threshold appear to delineate a decisive crossing for the one who holds the keys, or for anyone else. Rather, whether it be a question of lucidity or obscurity, being or non-being,

⁴³ Fränkel, "Parmenidesstudien," 166, 169.

⁴⁴ In "Der Spruch des Anaximander"—one of the essays that Celan had studied during the period from which "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel" dates—Heidegger writes of δίκη: "Zum Anwesenden als solchem muß die Fuge gehören samt der Möglichkeit, aus der Fuge zu sein. Das Anwesende ist das je Weilige. Die Weile west als die übergängliche Ankunft in den Weggang. Die Weile west zwischen Hervorkommen und Hinweggehen. [...] In dieses Zwischen ist das Je-Weilige gefügt. Dieses Zwischen ist die Fuge, der gemäß von Herkunft her zu Wegang hin das Weilende je gefügt ist." Heidegger, "Der Spruch Anaximander," in *Holzwege*, 321–73, here 355; cf. *La Bibliothèque philosophique*, 356. In his lecture course on Parmenides from 1942–43, he similarly comments upon this word: "Wenn wir dort [bei Parmenides] dieses Wort δίκη, worin für die Griechen zugleich anklingt das δείκνυμι, zeigen, weisen, und das δικάειν, werfen, durch 'Fug' übersetzen, dann fällt uns das bekannte Gegenwort 'Un-fug' ein. Aber der hier gemeinte 'Fug' ist nun nicht bloß das Gegenwesen zu irgendeinem von uns vorgestellten 'Un-fug.' Im Fug denken wir das weisende, zeigende, zuweisende und zugleich einweisende 'werfende' Fügen." Heidegger, *Parmenides* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1982), 137.

⁴⁵ Capelle, *Die Vorsokratiker*, 163; cf. *La Bibliothèque philosophique*, 8.

⁴⁶ This is also no inessential trait of divine names in Parmenides, whose significance alters through his words. Bollack emphasizes the reinscriptions that divine names undergo in Parmenides in his commentary, on which see, for example, Bollack, *Parménide*, 80–81. For a most extensive study of the transformation that takes place with divine names through the thinking and writing of Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles, see Clémence Ramnoux, *Héraclite, ou l'homme entre les choses et les mots*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1968).

advantage or shortcoming, and so forth, no decisive judgment between alternatives could be imperative here, and no single passage, key—: for the only imperative is to alter key and word.

MIT WECHSELNDEM SCHLÜSSEL

Mit wechselndem Schlüssel
schließt du das Haus auf, darin
der Schnee des Verschwiegenen treibt.
Je nach dem Blut, das dir quillt
aus Aug oder Mund oder Ohr,
wechselt dein Schlüssel.

Wechselt dein Schlüssel, wechselt das Wort,
das treiben darf mit den Flocken.
Je nach dem Wind, der dich fortstößt,
ballt um das Wort sich der Schnee.⁴⁷

It is in keeping with the changing key of the title that no retributive or distributive justice, but an anonymous other opens the house—namely, a "you," whose status as a "shifter" renders it alterable and distributable itself: "you" invokes another who is other with each instance of address, and whose invocation may also reach no one at all, solicit no response, and remain without all correspondence. Hence, the house that "you" are said to disclose ("aufschließen") belongs to no one and nowhere: it is not the house of day and night, not the house of a goddess or

⁴⁷ Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, 65.

the "house of being"⁴⁸—and not the house of any addressee—but merely "das Haus," whose situation remains utterly uncertain, in turn, there being no indication of its surroundings or any way it could be reached. If there were any determination outside the house here, it would be the empty space of the page that exposes it to be as much a placeless placeholder as the pronominal persona who opens it.

These lines may appear remote from Parmenides's poem, yet by leaving both the addressee and home address utterly open, Celan offers without a word another version of the journey through nowhere that Parmenides had described at length; and by drawing a blank in this way, Celan goes further in drawing out the resemblance of that trajectory to the chasm of the threshold, which had similarly revealed nothing to be experienced, seen, or said, but the rupture and void that were "there" all along. This thoroughly void situation is not contradicted, but becomes all the more pronounced when it changes, and snow is said to drift therein—"darin / der Schnee des Verschwiegenen treibt"—and not only because this often-frequented topos in Celan's vocabulary marks a blank interval here and elsewhere, as many other readers have noted.⁴⁹ For there is also no telling whether this snow ever entered from without before it began drifting

⁴⁸ This formulation appears in Heidegger's essay on Rilke, where it is said: "Das Sein durchmißt als es selbst seinen Bezirk, der dadurch bezirkt wird (τέμνειν, tempus), daß es im Wort west. Die Sprache ist der Bezirk (templum), d.h. das Haus des Seins." Heidegger, "Wozu Dichter?", in *Holzwege*, 269–320, 310. But the prooemium of Parmenides, with its echoes of an Odyssean journey from the errancy of mortal life to the home of the goddess who should disclose the truth, may likewise be considered a characterization of language as the house of being, as Bollack suggests: "Le retour de l'errant est domicilié dans la maison de l'Étant." Bollack, *Parménide*, 18.

⁴⁹ In his brief commentary on André du Bouchet's encounter with this poem in particular, Bernhard Böschenstein writes, for example, that the Celan's evocation of the "Schnee des Verschwiegenen" proceeds from out of an "Umgang mit der Pausensprache" that he had shared with other friends and poets such as du Bouchet. Bernhard Böschenstein, "Paul Celan im Gespräch mit deutschen und französischen Dichtern von Hölderlin bis zur Gegenwart," *Oxford German Studies* 34, no. 1 (2005): 65–78, 77. In the essay on Celan that he would inscribe under a title drawn from the poem, "Sprich auch du," Blanchot emphasizes "Schnee" among those "mots qui reviennent avec insistance" throughout Celan's oeuvre, before commenting that words such as "Schnee, Ferne, Nacht, Asche" recur "comme pour nous faire croire à un rapport avec une réalité ou matière poudreuse, molle, légère, peut-être accueillante, mais une telle impression bientôt est déviée vers l'aridité de la *pierre* (mot presque toujours là), de la *craie* , du *calcaire* et du *gravier* (*Kalk* , *Kiesel* , *Kreide*), neige alors dont la blancheur stérile est le blanc toujours plus blanc (cristal, cristal), sans augmentation ni croissance: le blanc qui est au fond de ce qui est sans fond [...]." Maurice Blanchot, "Le dernier à parler," in *Une voix venue d'ailleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 69–107, here 83–85. For Blanchot's title, see "Sprich auch du," in *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, 102–03.

within, and therefore no telling whether there is any outside beyond these minimal elements of a setting, whose drifting exceeds and unsettles even what little is said of them. Alone, "Schnee" could hardly mean "snow" in any speakable sense of the word, if is precipitated from out of the "Verschwiegenen," which estranges it from the crystalline formations otherwise known as "snow"—as well as any other referent, for that matter—and thereby silences it as it speaks. Yet the "Schnee des Verschwiegenen" is not simply settled with said silence, either; rather, the snow is shown to be at least as sonorous and porous as it is mute and opaque through the sibilant particles of this syntagma, which render it another vehicle for the hissing static that insists from "Schlüssel" and "schließen" onwards, and that crosses through the boundaries of these words, at once bearing and interfering with all that they may otherwise convey.⁵⁰ But also beyond this particular way of drifting, the "Schnee des Verschwiegenen" may trace back as well to the privative experience of "cold [ψυχρός]" and "silence [σιωπή]," which, according to the goddess of Parmenides, the corpse comes to sense through the absence of fire and the presence of night.⁵¹ With or without any traceable allusions, however, the strange nature of the snow would suggest that Celan's poem approaches the nocturnal experience of stillness and obscurity that Parmenides had briefly foregrounded upon the threshold of his, when he named the house of night along with Dike's changing key, while at the same time, the sheer anonymity of the experience that is traced in "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel" brings it closer still to giving word of the more radical alterity and obscurity of the threshold itself, whose opening for the ways of day and night cannot be identified with either. Either way, the many layers of the "Schnee des Verschwiegenen" further

⁵⁰ In his brilliant monograph devoted to Celan's poem, "Die Silbe Schmerz," Michael Levine explicates at length the divisibility of the minimal, literal elements of language that Celan poetry exposes. See Michael Levine, *Atomzertrümmerung: Zu einem Gedicht von Paul Celan*. Vienna and Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2018.

⁵¹ The outflow of blood that follows in "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel" only renders this possibility more plausible, and an earlier draft of Celan's poem even more emphatically suggests it, where the snow is said to proceed from the night that will have filled "you" with it—just as night is thought to fill the corpse in Parmenides—: "je nach dem Jahr, das die Nacht dir erfüllte / mit Schnee oder anderen Flocken." Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, 64.

indicate how this language voids and parts with itself so as to leave room for alternatives, leaving house and snow utterly without, in the most extreme sense of the word.

Within this "without"-language, the "*Haus*" thus barely differs from the "-*aus*" that it can neither hold off nor keep in, but that may be seen to turn it inside out through the literal elements into which it breaks down while staying intact, describing a motionless movement that grows all the more apparent when the "*Aug*" is drawn to it three lines later. But this word not only troubles the boundaries of the establishment, as Parmenides's way had also done, when it crossed through the interior of the goddess's home; for it also traces yet another version of the motionless movement that had characterized the reaching and cleaving of being to being. This time, however, the accent is placed not upon the continuity that holds together all that is, but upon the ruptures and contingencies that articulate it, and that thus allow no decision over the ontological *or* verbal status of the house, its outside, or its contents. Hence, as the poem goes on, no further word will be given of that unsteady structure, but only of the permutations that should go on altering key and word as they drift with the wind and snow:

Wechselt dein Schlüssel, wechselt das Wort,
das treiben darf mit den Flocken.
Je nach dem Wind, der dich fortstößt,
ballt um das Wort sich der Schnee.⁵²

Here, there is only exile, whose indefinite extent and blank expanse are not only indicated by the sheer drift that is named, but also made graphic by the reduction that will have occurred from the opening sequence of six lines to one of four, and radicalized by the fact that there is no point of

⁵² Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, 65.

departure, and therefore no place for nostalgia. Rather, this exile is rendered all the more extreme and uncanny for the fact that it falls nonetheless under the initial auspices of a "Haus," which never could have stood for cover, penetrated as it was by the elements from the outset, and which therefore stands in *ab initio* as a cover name that may, as such, always be changed for another—or none at all—over this liminary space of language, where there are no ins and outs, but only alterity and alteration.

If no threshold is named—if no explicit entry to the home and no implicit exit to the winds takes place—then this can only be because there could be no limit to define the location of the liminary itself, and because the liminary character of this language could not be limited by a word. Thus, even when the poem comes closest to designating a threshold of sorts—even when, namely, the organs of perception are evoked as outlets for blood—these portals are not posited, but are merely admitted as a series of alternative possibilities, marked off by disjunctive conjunctions that not only keep them apart—"aus Aug *oder* Mund *oder* Ohr"—but also keep repeating, such that the drone of the "oder" verges upon drowning out the "Ohr" beside it, as the "aus" had done with the "Aug" (and the "Haus"), to say nothing of the "und" that is enclosed in the "Mund," but that speaks through it nonetheless in this verse, where conjunctions and substantives alternately echo one another and thereby alter themselves in turn.⁵³ From the house at the poem's departure; to the body parts "or" particles of grammar in its midst; to the particles of snow and utterly unparticular "Flocken" in the end—: each term of "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel" is a threshold-word that interminably opens to others beside itself, and in being beside

⁵³ Later, when the word for the porous formation called "Schnee" comes to alternate with "Flocken," its alternate similarly opens it to an indefinite range of divergent alternatives, from the flakes of snowfall to the dust of a fallout. Wolfgang Pfeifer traces it to the Indo-European root "*pleuk-," which he glosses, "Flocke, Feder, Haar, Abfall." Wolfgang Pfeifer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, s.v. "Flocke." <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Flocke>. Accessed 23 August 2019. Celan suggests a similarly indefinite range of possibilities, when he simply writes "Flocken," or, as he had put it in an earlier version of his poem: "Schnee oder anderen Flocken." Celan, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, 64.

itself in this way, it *is* not so much as once—because it is at no time *one*—although it may be precisely "how it-is [ὡς ἔστιν]"⁵⁴ in the sense that Parmenides once broached, when he spoke of being as cleaving and thereby indicated, despite his manifest intentions, the recess and excess that are constitutive for its continuum, the "without" without which it could not reach itself. Once again, as Hamacher will have written, Celan's exposition of language occurs not in the "*Haus des Seins, sondern im Aus des Seins*."⁵⁵

Because, however, the "Aus des Seins" could not be said to be, without ceasing to be what it "is"—because it too would have to move out, as Hamacher also indicates in his analyses⁵⁶—its saying can only be carried out in such a way that nothing is directly stated of it, and nothing that is stated stands firm. This is why the relatively conventional morphological and syntactic formations of Celan's verses are at once left as they *stand* and *left* as they stand through the elements that de-com-pose them, whose aleatory dispersion throughout the poem, more than any word or phrase, is what allows each word to be surrounded with the "Schnee des Verschwiegenen," without reducing that snow to an object of cognition or elucidation: "Je nach dem Wind, der dich fortstiebt / ballt um das Wort sich der Schnee." But it is also why this same coincidence of dispersion and condensation—both of which, according to Parmenides, cannot be: "Es löst sich ja nirgends auch nur irgendwie aus seinem Gefüge noch ballt es sich wieder zusammen"⁵⁷—cannot and does not rest with its implicit confirmation in these last lines of Celan's poem, either. As one of its permutations and near-homonyms suggests, the "Wort" is already "fort" before it is said to be the nucleus around which snow balls, while the balling of

⁵⁴ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 64, trans. modified.

⁵⁵ Hamacher, "Tò autó," 192.

⁵⁶ Already the echoes and citational resonances of Hamacher's phrasing suggest this and thereby prevent the "Aus" he names from assuming any settled status.

⁵⁷ Capelle, *Die Vorsokratiker*, 164.

snow itself scatters to the wind that drives it, should the initial evocation of wind provoke one to recall the nearness of "ballen" to "blasen" ("blasting").⁵⁸ However close these last verses may come to closure—however far they may go in drawing together the movement of words with the words for that movement—they also suggest that no attempt to catch the drift could catch up, and they thereby indicate what Celan would later call in his letter to Jürgen Rausch the "Unendlichkeitsanspruch jeglicher Aussage in diesem Bereich."⁵⁹

What seems to have opened close to the topoi of Parmenides's prooemium thus appears to drift off *ad infinitum*, far from any supporting frame, let alone a steady "way" of being. But even as Celan parts ways with Parmenides, the poem also does not leave the threshold where, "mit wechselndem Schlüssel," Dike had disclosed a "gaping chasm [χάσμ' ἀχανές]" at the gateway of day and night (Fr. 1).⁶⁰ Rather, it traces another approach to the abyss which Parmenides largely passes over in silence, and it does so through no direct discourse of divine revelation—and no word that would definitively break that silence—but through allowing each word to speak in such a way that it discloses its gaps and its muteness. Through to even those the formulations that remind of the decisions and distributions of Dike—"Je nach dem"—the poem echoes the scission—the "Jähe"—that she will have originally opened in her own place, at an indefinite remove from every being, judgment, measure, or proportion. Such is the alteration of key that traverses "Mit wechselndem Schlüssel." Such is the threshold-language that precedes any being and that crosses through each and every one. Ever before every location, distribution, or attribution; ever before every transcendental structure or ontological substrate, "Mit

⁵⁸ The two are not only phonetically, but also etymologically related. See Pfeifer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, s.v. "ballen." <https://www.dwds.de/wb/ballen>. Accessed 23 August 2019.

⁵⁹ Celan, *Die Gedichte*, 705–06.

⁶⁰ Coxon, *The Fragments*, 50; trans. modified.

wechselndem Schlüssel" speaks the alternation of speech and silence, it speaks and alters, and it alters, speaking—: *a limine*.